

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, February 7, 1812. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.**

**TO THOMAS JEFFERSON. MAD. MSS.**

Washington, Feby. 7, 1812.

Dear Sir I have recd. several letters from you which not requiring special answers, I now beg leave to acknowledge in the lump. I have delayed it in the hope that I might add something on our public affairs not uninteresting. If there be any thing at present of this character it will be found in the inclosed paper from N. York. We have no late official information from Europe; but all that we see from G. B. indicates an adherence to her mad policy towards the U.S. The Newspapers give you a sufficient insight into the measures of Congress. With a view to enable the Executive to step at once into Canada they have provided after two months delay, for a regular force<sup>1</sup> requiring 12 to raise it, and after 3 months for a volunteer force, on terms not likely to raise it at all for that object. The mixture of good & bad, avowed & disguised motives accounting for these things is curious eno' but not to be explained in the compass

of a letter. Among other jobbs on my hands is the case of Wilkinson.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The act of January 11th provided for raising immediately ten regiments of infantry, two of artillery and one of light dragoons for five years unless sooner discharged. The act of February 6th authorized the President to accept volunteers to the number of 50,000, to do duty whenever he should deem proper and to be bound to remain in the service for twelve months after arriving at a rendezvous. They were to retain their own officers and receive

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the same pay and allowances as regular troops.— *Annals of Cong.* 12th Cong., Part 2, 2230 *et seq.*

2 James Wilkinson was Senior Brigadier-General in the army. He was tried by court-martial September 2d to December 25th on eight charges—being a pensioner of Spain, treasonable projects for the dismemberment of the United States, conspiracy with Aaron Burr, connivance at treasonable designs, conspiracy against a friendly nation, disobedience of orders, neglect of duty, misapplication and waste of public funds. His acquittal was because there was not sufficient evidence to convict. February 14th, Madison approved the finding with this memorandum:

“I have examined and considered the foregoing proceedings of the General Court Martial, held at Fredericktown, for the trial of Brigadier General Wilkinson—and although I have observed in those proceedings, with regret, that there are instances in the conduct of the court as well as of the officer on trial, which are evidently and justly objectionable, his acquittal of the several charges, exhibited against him, is approved and his sword is accordingly ordered to be restored.”— *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong., Part 2, p. 2125.

His defence fills 6 or 700 pages of the most colossal paper. The minutes of the Court, oral written & printed testimony, are all in proportion. A month has not yet carried me thro' the whole.

We have had of late a hard winter & much Ice which still lies on the water in view. The reiteration of Earthquakes continues to be reported from various quarters. They have slightly reached the State of N. Y. and been severely felt W. and S. Westwardly. There was one here this morning at 5 or 6 minutes after 4 o'C. It was rather stronger than any preceding one, & lasted several minutes; with sensible tho' very slight repetitions throughout the succeeding hour.

Be assured of my best affections.